Ontario

March 1988

A Guide to Forming Local Access to Permanent Housing Committees

A Community Response to Homelessness

Prepared jointly by:

The Ministry of Community and Social Services and
The Ministry of Housing

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Dear Friend:

On December 17, 1987, as part of a broad new effort to address the problem of homelessness in Ontario, the provincial government announced funding for long-term, permanent housing to match money spent on short-term emergency shelter. This initative recognized that, to solve the problem of homelessness, we must build on the working partnerships already developed with community groups and seek to establish new ones. One of the ways we hope to do this is by urging the communities of Ontario to work with us to develop local Access to Permanent Housing Committees.

These Access Committees will bring together citizens concerned about people who are homeless; they will create a forum for the exchange of ideas and information; they will provide an opportunity for communities to share. Most important, communities will be able to work together in setting priorities and identifying methods to improve access to permanent housing for those in need.

During the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987), many individuals and groups stressed that communities must take a focused approach to homelessness. We expect that local Access Committees will provide that focused response, build on the valuable groundwork laid down during the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and continue to raise public awareness of this very real problem in Ontario.

We are also aware that, in many communities, local groups have been able to develop effective services to support homeless people in finding and maintaining permanent housing. To encourage this kind of service, we have set aside $6 million in Access Funding and ask that, as part of their mandate, the Access Commmittees identify where such services could meet community needs.

This guide has been prepared to help communities establish volunteer Access to Permanent Housing Committees. As this is a new initiative, the guide will be updated to include suggestions from participants at the planned information sessions. We look forward to working with communities to develop a wide range of community-based approaches that will enable people who are homeless to find and maintain permanent housing.

Chaviva Hošek

The Honourable Chaviva Hosek
Minister of Housing

The Honourable John Sweeney
Minister of Community and
Social Services

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Who Are the Homeless?

People who are homeless are those who lack secure, adequate, permanent housing. They could be anyone — people we know as neighbours or members of our own family. They may be people who are entirely without weatherproof shelter or those who have temporary overnight shelter but no permanent home during the day. They may also be people who are currently housed but who may — for economic or other reasons — be facing eviction and have nowhere to go and no adequate means of finding affordable, alternative housing.

All of these individuals — whether they are living in a park or worrying about possible eviction — are denied the security of permanent housing and the right to choose for themselves when and where they will move. They are forced to devote time, energy and probably a disproportionate amount of their income to secure one of life's basic needs: shelter. Without a secure base, they may find it difficult to pursue other goals in life, such as employment or education, or to have the ability to care for their children.

Homelessness or the threat of homelessness robs people of more than shelter; it also takes away opportunity. Homelessness denies our communities the full potential of our citizens.

Why Form Access to Permanent Housing Committees?

Access to Permanent Housing Committees are designed to provide a community focus to enable people who are homeless — or at risk of being homeless — obtain and maintain permanent housing.

During 1987, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH), conferences and workshops were held throughout the province to discuss homelessness and the ways in which communities were responding to individuals and families who have trouble finding adequate shelter.

During these discussions, self-help and advocacy groups and organizations which provide services to homeless people argued convincingly that, if homeless people are to take charge of their own lives, they need access to safe, secure, permanent housing. While emergency shelters and hostels can provide temporary help, they cannot provide — nor were they meant to provide — a secure environment from which a family or individual can build a life. Participants also stressed that initiatives that will enable the homeless to find permanent housing must be part of a co-ordinated, community-based approach.

Participants in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless suggested a number of possible strategies and approaches. Among them was the recommendation that communities establish ongoing forums in order to develop a sustained, responsive and interactive approach to the local problems of homeless people. Through these forums, communities can come together to:

- identify how homelessness affects the community
- determine the best approaches to addressing the issue of homelessness

The Access to Permanent Housing Committees are intended to provide these community forums. Members of the Access Committees will be volunteers who will look at the broad range of homelessness issues in their communities and encourage a co-ordinated community approach that will take advantage of the creativity, expertise and commitment of the community.

As one approach to assisting those who are most in need (e.g. people living in emergency shelters), some Access Committees may:

- identify possible sources of permanent housing that already or potentially exist in the community
- look for creative ways to enable those who are homeless to obtain and maintain that permanent housing.

To do this, the Access Committee may decide that a certain, action-oriented service (or services) could enable people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless to obtain and maintain permanent housing. In that case, the Access Committees will submit proposals for Access Funding for creative, action-oriented service projects.

What is the Role of an Access to Permanent Housing Committee?

Each Access to Permanent Housing Committee will provide a community focus on the problem of homelessness. It will also encourage the community to take whatever steps are possible to ensure that those who are homeless -- or at risk of being homeless -- have access to the permanent housing that actually or potentially exists in the community. The Access Committee will:

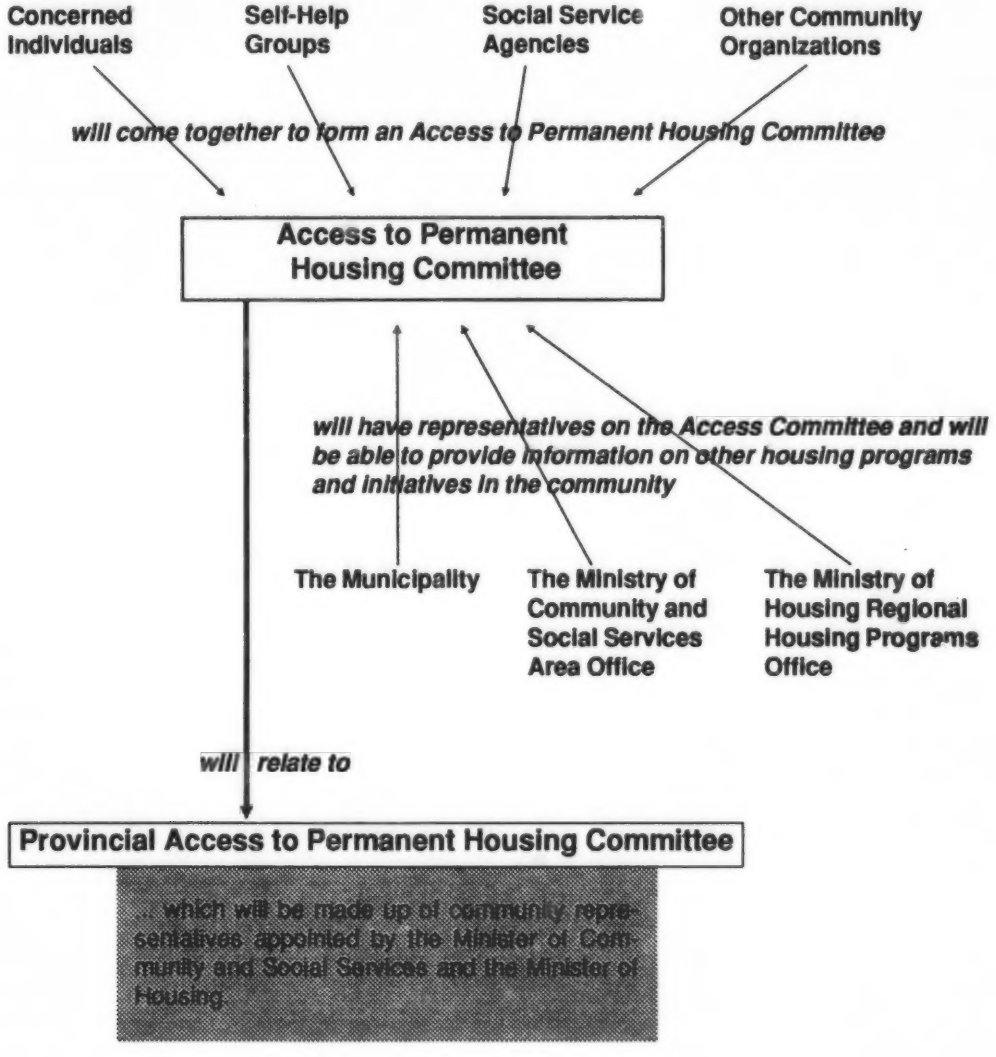
- identify the particular problems facing those in the local community who are homeless.
- identify the barriers which may limit housing options available in the community.
- propose approaches to solving problems and removing barriers.
- ensure that everyone in the community is aware of other housing and social service programs that may assist people who are homeless.
- encourage community awareness and understanding of the needs of homeless people.
- explore any issues and problems facing the homeless which the community deems appropriate.
- encourage local organizations and agencies to take advantage of all programs that provide funding for housing initiatives.

In addition, in many communities, the Access to Permanent Housing Committees may determine that there is a need for certain support services - such as a housing co-ordinator - to enable people who are homeless to find the permanent housing that is or could be available in the community. In that case, the Access Committee will:

- receive and review proposals for such support services developed by community groups and organizations.
- work with self-help groups, community organizations and local social service agencies to encourage them to develop proposals for services designed to assist those at greatest need (e.g. people in emergency shelters, parents whose children are in the care of the Children's Aid because of lack of housing).
- request government funding for a service or for a co-ordinated package of service proposals.

Who Will Be Involved in the Access to Permanent Housing Committees?

Each Access to Permanent Housing Committee will likely develop and operate in a different way. However, the following diagram describes the roles and responsibilities of all those who are likely to be involved in a typical Access Committee.


Concerned Individuals
Self-Help Groups
Social Service Agencies
Other Community Organizations
will come together to form an Access to Permanent Housing Committee
Access to Permanent Housing Committee
will have representatives on the Access Committee and will be able to provide information on other housing programs and initiatives in the community
The Municipality
The Ministry of Community and Social Services Area Office
The Ministry of Housing Regional Housing Programs Office
will relate to
Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee
... which will be made up of community representatives appointed by the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Housing

What Funding or Support is Available for the Access to Permanent Housing Committees?

Funding for Travel and Expenses

Although the Access Committees will be volunteer groups, there will be funding to cover the costs of travel as required, communication expenses, mailing and other incidentals. In this way, distance and the cost of travel should not prevent any group or individual from participating.

Access Funding

Because the Access Committees will be a focus for community action on homelessness, the government has also set aside up to $6 million in Access Funding to support action-oriented services. These services must be recommended by the Access Committee and designed to enable those most severely affected by homelessness to find the permanent housing which is or could be available in the community.

Access Committees can submit proposals for up to $312,500:

- a maximum of $250,000 will be provided by the province
- a maximum of $62,500 may be provided by the municipality.

In a small number of cases, where there is a desire to do so, the 20% municipal share may be contributed by another community group. However, this would be a rare exception.

Larger communities (i.e. one representing a large, regional municipality) may well require the full $312,500 which would fund six or seven services; smaller communities may identify only one or two services and apply for less funding.

There is a limit to the amount of Access Funding available in each year of the program. In the first year, there is $1.75 million. Any services funded in the first year will receive ongoing funding for a second year — as long as the local Access Committee continues to endorse the service. During the second year, there will be an additional $2 million in Access Funding so the program will be able to fund additional services and enable more people throughout Ontario to obtain and maintain permanent housing.

If the requests from communities exceed the available funding, the Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee will recommend funding for those services it considers most likely to succeed.

Deadlines for Applications for Access Funding

The first deadline for applications is **August 1, 1988**. If there are still funds available after the first round of proposals, the second deadline for submissions is **October 1, 1988.** The deadline for submissions for the second year of Access Funding is **January 15, 1989.**

How will Access Committees Be Organized?

Information Sessions

To encourage communities to form Access Committees, approximately 20 regional information sessions will be held across the province during the spring of 1988. Representatives of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Housing will attend each information session.

The information sessions will:

- bring together the individuals and groups who may be interested in participating in Access Committees
- explain the goals and objectives of the Access to Permanent Housing Committees
- answer any questions participants may have
- identify people or organizations willing to organize the initial meeting of the Access Committee in each community

The regional sessions will include individuals and groups from a number of neighbouring communities. Participants will determine whether one Access to Permanent Housing Committee adequately represents all these communities or whether some communities have distinct needs and require their own Access Committee. Those gathered for one information session may go on to form separate Access to Permanent Housing Committees, each representing the problems and concerns of different geographic areas in the region. During the session, participants can meet in community groups and discuss forming a local Access Committee.

Attending an information session is only one way for a community to organize a local Access Committee. Some groups have heard about the initiative and have already formed a group. In other communities, interested individuals may read this guide and — perhaps with the assistance of local Ministry of Community and Social Services and Ministry of Housing staff — organize a local information session.

If you would like to know more about the information sessions, contact your local Ministry of Community and Social Services Area Office or your local Regional Housing Programs Office. Numbers are listed at the back of this guide.

How Many Access Committees Will There Be?

It seems likely that Access Committees will represent and relate to the same areas served by local councils. There can be as many local Access Committees as there are distinct, geographic communities in Ontario.

Within each community, there should be only **one** Access to Permanent Housing Committee. However, in a bilingual community, the interests of the community may be better served by having two working groups: one francophone and one anglophone. The two working groups would come together to make the final decisions on community priorities.

A Guide to Establishing an Access to Permanent Housing Committee

It is up to each community to form the local Access to Permanent Housing Committee. In some communities in Ontario, local groups or coalitions are already formed, and they may simply expand their mandate and membership to include a focus on permanent housing for people who are homeless. Where there is no existing group, individuals interested in forming a committee are encouraged to do so. The following pages provide a detailed guide to forming an Access Committee.

Who Should Participate in the Local Access Committee?

Individuals or organizations identified at the information sessions will organize the initial meeting. Organizers should make every effort to ensure that anyone who is concerned about homelessness — whether an individual who is having trouble finding adequate permanent housing or an organization responsible for operating the local shelter — is invited to the initial meeting. In this way, the committee will truly represent all the community's concerns. In putting together the list of people to be invited, organizers should consider the following groups and individuals:

- self-help and advocacy groups
- families and individuals who have been homeless and have found permanent shelter
- families and individuals who are currently or at risk of being homeless
- organizations involved with hostels/shelters
- social service organizations who work with individuals who may have particular problems finding affordable housing, such as those working with young people, single parents, people who are unemployed or in retraining programs, victims of family violence, new immigrants or refugees, native Canadians, former psychiatric patients and ex-offenders.
- staff of agencies serving families (e.g. Children's Aid Societies, etc.)
- local branches of the Canadian Mental Health Association
- neighbourhood information centres
- church and other religious groups
- housing providers, such as non-profit organizations, housing authorities, landlords, developers and builders
- tenant organizations
- legal aid clinics
- citizen or volunteer groups which have taken an interest in homelessness.
- service clubs
- the municipality (local, regional or county)
- the Ministry of Community and Social Services Area Office
- the Ministry of Housing Regional Housing Programs Office

Membership on the Committee should be as open as possible. Within your community, there may be other groups or individuals not listed here who should be part of the committee.

Organizing the Initial Meeting

Anyone who is used to organizing meetings will be familiar with the following checklist. It is included here as a handy reference guide.

It can be difficult to contact everyone who may want to be involved with the Access Committee. Organizers may consider announcing or promoting the first general meeting — and all subsequent meetings — of the Access to Permanent Housing Committee in other ways, including:

- notices in association and organization bulletins or newsletters.
- notices on bulletin boards in community centres, municipal buildings, grocery stores, etc.
- notices in the local newspaper. Some newspapers will print announcements of public meetings for volunteer groups for free.
- announcements on local radio. Most local radio stations will read announcements of local events as a public service.

It is important that everyone be given an opportunity to know about the meeting and to attend. Notices and announcements are also a way to help raise public awareness of the problem of homelessness — even among those who do not participate in the Access Committee. Any notice or announcement should include:

- the purpose of the Access to Permanent Housing Committee
- the purpose of the meeting
- the place and time of the meeting
- the fact that anyone who is interested is welcome to attend
- a name, phone number and address to contact for more information

The meeting room for the initial meeting should be:

- large enough to accommodate everyone
- wheelchair accessible and comfortable for people with disabilities
- condusive to open discussion
- (for large meetings) equipped with a podium, stage, microphones or a speaker system so that speakers can be heard

If the Access Committee is meeting in a bilingual area, organizers should ensure that the arrangements are comfortable for both French and English-speaking participants.

As there is no budget for the Committee, organizers may consider asking one of the organizations involved to provide coffee or charging a small amount for coffee to make sure that no one is out-of-pocket.

Spend some time planning the meeting. Select someone from the organizing group who is a good speaker to present the idea of the Access to Permanent Housing Committee. That person should also describe the decisions or tasks required for the first meeting including:

- ☑ Confirm that the community wishes to have an Access to Permanent Housing Committee and will be actively involved.

- ☑ Determine the geographic boundaries for the Access Committee. (It will usually be the community which relates to a municipal or regional government, but it could be larger if nearby areas wanted to be included.)

- ☑ Agree to the purpose for the Committee. This may involve affirming the purpose described in this guide or refining it to reflect more exactly the needs of the community. (e.g. Some communities may choose to concentrate on public education; others may want to look at other issues.)

- ☑ If the Access Committee is large, establish a working group or subcommittees to be responsible for certain, specific tasks. (Whenever possible, members of the working group should be enthusiastic and willing to work because a lot of time may be required -- on a volunteer basis.) The working group should be representative of the organizations and individuals involved in the larger Access Committee. Whenever possible, it would be helpful to include someone in the community who has been homeless and has found permanent housing in order to benefit from that person's experience.

- ☑ Select a chairperson for the working group and/or for the larger Committee. (These may or may not be one and the same person. The chairperson for the working group should be an enthusiastic person who is able to organize others and get tasks done. The chairperson of the larger Committee should be knowledgeable about the interest groups in the community and able to encourage people with different views to co-operate and work together.)

- ☑ Select a name for the Committee.

- ☑ Establish a structure for the work of the Committee including:
  - — how often the full Committee will meet (e.g. At least four times a year or more often as determined by the members. It may be necessary to meet more often — perhaps monthly — while the Access Committee is getting established.)
  - — how the working group will report back to the Committee

- ☑ Discuss ways of keeping everyone in the community informed of the issues and the progress of the Committee.

Access Committee Tasks

1. Prepare a Letter of Intent

Each Access Committee is expected to send a letter of intent to the Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee to confirm that the Access Committee exists. The letter of intent should include:

- a statement that the community has formed an Access to Permanent Housing Committee
- the names and affiliations of those involved in the Access Committee
- some indication that the working group and the Committee have been endorsed by the community
- the geographic boundaries for the work of the Access Committee
- the name of someone the Provincial Access Committee can contact for more information about the Access Committee.

In response, the Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee will review the letter of intent to ensure there is no duplication within a community and will send the Access Committee:

- a confirmation letter
- names of ministry contacts and available resources
- information on how to apply for the initial travel/expense funds and the process for submitting expense claims.

The letter of intent should be sent to:

The Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee
2nd Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2E5

2. Identify the particular problems facing people in the community who are homeless.

The goal of the Access Committee is to enable homeless people to secure permanent housing. To do that, it is necessary to understand the problems of people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. In some communities, young people may have particular difficulty finding housing. In others, the most vulnerable group may be single parent families or women and children who are living in hostels to escape family violence. Problems may include lack of awareness of existing housing programs or fear or negative attitudes that make landlords reluctant to rent rooms or apartments to people who are homeless. Some people may be trapped in the "no housing, no job — no job, no housing" cycle.

Participants would share their knowledge and experience, decide where the need is greatest and choose a focus for their work. Whatever priorities the Access Committee sets, it should be able to demonstrate that there are valid reasons for its decisions.

3. Identify the barriers which may limit housing options available in the community.

The Access Committee could use a series of brainstorming sessions to identify barriers in the community that prevent people from finding and maintaining permanent housing. Is zoning a problem? If so, what could be done? What have other communities done? Have they been successful? The municipal representative may be able to provide advice. Would more information about possible housing options help the community develop affordable housing? Are negative attitudes on the part of potential landlords a problem?

Some barriers may be beyond the scope of the Access Committee. While all barriers should be part of the committee review, the Access Committee may wish to focus its efforts and attention on those barriers that it can begin to address — through lobbying, public education, better co-ordination of services, sharing resources and information or through Access Funding.

4. Propose some ways to enable people who are homeless to find permanent housing.

Increasing the amount of permanent housing stock in a community takes time. Over the short term, the Access Committee can develop innovative ways to enable people to find the permanent housing that already or potentially exists in the community. Access Committees will do more with what communities already have — until more becomes available.

For example, if people are homeless because of lack of information on existing housing programs, the Access Committee could invite the Regional Housing Programs Office (RHPO) to explain what is available. If housing for young people is a problem, the Access Committee may encourage those who have been successful finding permanent housing for other people to share their ideas with those working with young people. Advocacy may be a response. In some communities groups have been successful in increasing access to permanent housing by addressing the zoning bylaws of a particular area. In others, an effective mediation service was able to increase the number of landlords willing to rent to tenants who were not very experienced in maintaining their own independent housing arrangements. The types and range of activities will depend on the Access Committee's priorities and its knowledge of the community.

The Access Committee may decide that funding for certain, specific services -- such as a housing co-ordinator or a room and board mediator -- could improve access to the permanent housing that already exists. Then, the Access Committee could encourage local groups to develop proposals to provide these services. (See the section on preparing proposals.)

5. Explore other issues and problems facing the homeless as the committee deems appropriate.

Although most of its activities will stress permanent housing, the purpose of the Access Committee is also to focus attention in the community on the issue of homelessness. It is up to the Access Committee members to determine how best to use this forum for the benefit of the community.

6. Encourage community awareness and understanding of the needs of homeless people.

Many people continue to have a negative stereotype of people who are homeless. Even those who do not have a negative stereotype may suffer from the "not in my neighbourhood" attitude that prevents people from finding permanent housing and becoming active members of the community.

Part of the task of the executive and the larger Access Committee is to educate the community about the local problem of homelessness and the needs of some of its citizens. The more that the Access Committee can do to change negative attitudes, the more people within the community will want to be involved. More support within the community will mean that landlords, developers, municipalities and neighbourhood associations will be more likely to do something about the structural problems that cause homelessness.

The Access Committee should help the community develop a sense of responsibility for its members who are homeless and **encourage the feeling that the problem can be solved.** This may involve working with the local paper to prepare stories on homelessness in the community and on people who have found permanent housing and become active in the community. The Access Committee could sponsor meetings and show films which highlight creative responses to homelessness. Members may talk to community groups and encourage local politicians, ministers, teachers and others who have influence in the community to talk openly about homelessness. **The Access Committee should encourage a community commitment to finding solutions to the problem of homelessness.**

Preparing a Proposal for Access Funding

Access Committees will likely identify a number of possible solutions to the local problem of homelessness. One solution may be the need for an increase in available housing units. Another solution may be certain, specific services which would support people who are homeless in finding and maintaining permanent housing. If an Access Committees decides that such services are needed in the community, it can apply for Access Funding. The following section describes in detail how to prepare a proposal for funding.

Encouraging Groups and Organizations to Submit Proposals

In the process of looking at many possible approaches to homelessness, the Access Committee may identify a problem that cannot be addressed by existing programs or services, but which might be solved by a service which enabled homeless people to find permanent housing. In that case, the Access Committee would encourage the community to develop appropriate proposals. In some communities, agencies or organizations may already have ideas or proposals for the Access Committee to consider. In some, self-help groups and organizations may respond to the priorities developed by the Access Committee by preparing proposals. In others, the Access Committee may have to be proactive: asking groups to prepare proposals and even helping them design the service.

The Access to Permanent Housing initiative will encourage new groups and new coalitions, as well as established organizations, to submit creative proposals. For this reason, Access Committees are encouraged to look particularly at the potential of self-help groups and smaller organizations to provide these services. Often, these younger, less-established groups have very innovative ideas. However, they are sometimes overlooked in favour of more established agencies and groups because they have a different kind of expertise. These groups have a lot to offer, and it's an advantage to the community to have them involved and active.

Members of the Access Committee should also look at proposals that cover a range of target groups and offer a variety of different approaches.

To prepare their proposals, some organizations may want to know about local planning studies. Members of the local or municipal council and their staff can provide this information and this is another reason to involve them from the beginning in the Access Committee. Access Committees will also want to work closely with municipalities for another reason: funding is available to municipalities — from both the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs — to examine local housing needs and to prepare strategies to meet those identified needs.

Services Eligible for Access Funding

A number of Ministry of Housing programs — such as the nonprofit housing program — provide funding for buildings. Access Funding is different: it will pay for people — not for buildings. For example, communities could request funding for individuals who will assist people to obtain and maintain permanent housing, such as:

- housing co-ordinators
- support workers for youth in room and board networks
- mediation workers to assist people in danger of being evicted
- housing facilitators to work with specific groups of people who have difficulty finding housing

A number of communities have initiated programs that would qualify for funding under this program.

One organization hired facilitators to help people who were living in hostels develop a sense of community and self-confidence and to find apartments. The facilitators also visited them regularly once they were established in their apartments to help them solve any possible problems with landlords or neighbours and build on their skills until they could manage their own environment.

Another community self-help group focused on the problems of a target group often stereotyped as "not being good tenants." The group recognized that these individuals are often denied access to housing because landlords fear they will not be good tenants. In response, the group hired a summer student who worked for four months to develop better communication with landlords. The student sent a flyer and personal letters to landlords, to reassure them that special efforts are made to match tenants to the right living situation and to ensure the tenants understand their responsibilities. Through this approach, landlords made 51 rental units available and 46 out of 70 people who referred themselves to the housing service found permanent housing — an extraordinary effort and a major service to the community that didn't require building.

Service support can also help make building projects more effective.

> An organization that was building four- and five-person shared living space apartments hired a worker to do community development. The worker spend six months helping the groups who would move into the apartments to form a supportive network. The groups discussed the building, reviewed the plans, discussed how the plans might be modified to meet their needs and developed rules for living together. Through this approach the building became a more effective community and the chances of people choosing to stay in the housing arrangement are much greater.

A reasonable investment in these kinds of action-oriented services can have a substantial impact in a community.

Criteria for Access Funding

To qualify for funding, proposed services must meet the following criteria:

- The service will **assist those who are homeless** or at risk of being homeless to access permanent housing

- The proposed service is **staff oriented**. The funding is provided to hire people, not to renovate buildings.

- The proposal is for **services for individuals who are not currently being served by another permanent housing initiative** (i.e. the service does not duplicate any service currently available for the same target group in the community.)

- The proposed service will **augment or assist housing efforts already underway** in the community to help people who are homeless.

- The service clearly **relates to a specific, identified community requirement** and proposes an appropriate response.

- The proposal includes its **objectives and its intention to keep the basic information required** to keep the Access Committee informed about the services and their effectiveness.

- The proposed service is **sponsored by or associated with a recognized social service agency or community organization.** The sponsoring organization will provide office space, supervision and administrative support for the project.

- The proposed service is **endorsed as fulfilling a community need** by:
  - the local Access to Permanent Housing Committee
  - the municipality
  - the Ministry of Community and Social Services Area Office
  - the Regional Housing Programs Office.

Developing a Proposal

Application forms for the project funding will be available from the local MCSS office. These forms will also outline the basic information that an agency or organization will keep on their activities. This information will enable the local Access Committee to determine whether the service has successfully met its objectives. Any proposal should answer the following questions:

What is the overall goal of the proposed service?

How is this goal consistent with the purpose of Access Funding which is: ***to provide services which focus on enabling people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless to obtain and maintain that permanent housing which is available (or potentially available) in the local community.***

Who is the service designed to assist? (target group)

What is the capacity of the service? How many people will it be able to serve over its first year?

Why is this service required?

Why do you think you are the most appropriate organization to provide this service?

Describe how the service will operate. How will you reach your target group?

Where will the service be provided?

Provide a job description for the person/s to be hired.

How will the service link with other groups and organizations concerned with the same target group or with homelessness?

Who in the organization will be responsible for supervising the service?

Describe the management/supervision process. (For example, will there be regular meetings or reports?)

How will you evaluate the service? What criteria will you use?

How often will the service be evaluated?

How much will the service cost?

Please note: The budget for the service should include salaries, fringe benefits, expenses such as travel and administrative costs. Although the sponsoring organization will provide office space, the budget should include the administrative expenses of having an extra person to supervise. (e.g. If the project will require secretarial support, the sponsoring organization should not be out-of-pocket.)

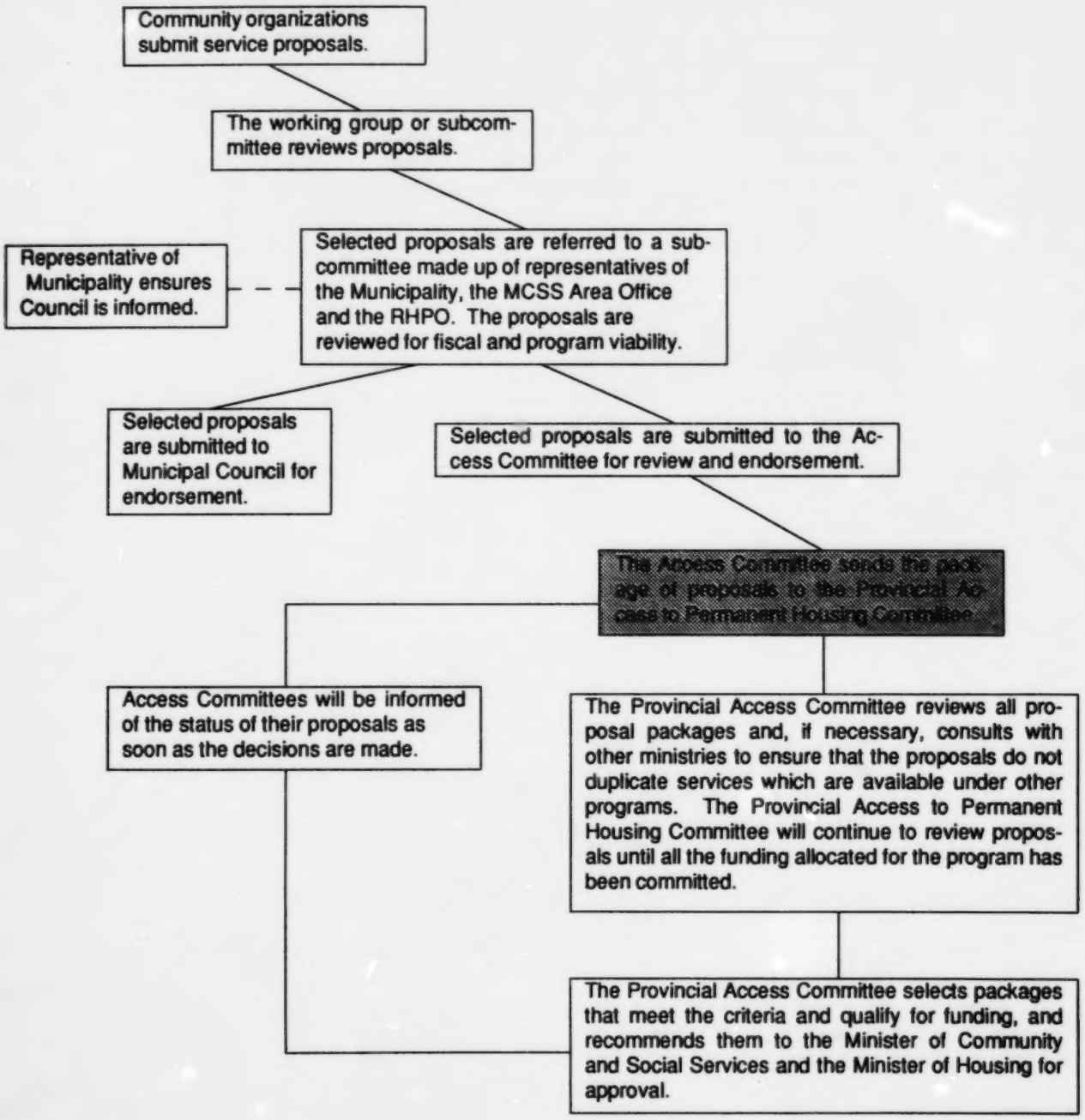
Putting Together A Proposal Package

Each local Access to Permanent Housing Committee is likely to receive a number of applications from community agencies and organizations. The Access Committee must select those proposals which will enable people in the community to find and keep permanent housing and submit the package to the Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee. A covering letter should endorse the package and explain:

- the priorities set by the Access Committee
- how the proposed projects and services relate to the priorities
- why the Access Committee is recommending this particular package and mix of proposals.

The package should also include letters of endorsement from the municipality, the MCSS Area Office and the Regional Housing Programs Officer which indicate that the package is fulfilling a community need.

The Review Process


Community organizations submit service proposals.
The working group or subcommittee reviews proposals.
Representative of Municipality ensures Council is informed.
Selected proposals are referred to a subcommittee made up of representatives of the Municipality, the MCSS Area Office and the RHPO. The proposals are reviewed for fiscal and program viability.
Selected proposals are submitted to Municipal Council for endorsement.
Selected proposals are submitted to the Access Committee for review and endorsement.
The Access Committee sends the package of proposals to the Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee.
Access Committees will be informed of the status of their proposals as soon as the decisions are made.
The Provincial Access Committee reviews all proposal packages and, if necessary, consults with other ministries to ensure that the proposals do not duplicate services which are available under other programs. The Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee will continue to review proposals until all the funding allocated for the program has been committed.
The Provincial Access Committee selects packages that meet the criteria and qualify for funding, and recommends them to the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Housing for approval.

Administering the Projects

Procedures for administering projects and funding will be developed by April 1988. Once projects are approved by the Provincial Access Committee and announced by the Ministers, Access Committees will be notified about the exact procedures. Responsibilities will be as follows:

The sponsoring organization will:

- sign a contract with the designated government office under the usual terms and conditions.
- provide space and administrative support for the project worker.
- be responsible, on behalf of the Access Committee, for supervising the worker and monitoring and evaluating the project.

The designated government office will:

- ensure that the services are financially viable
- report any financial irregularities to the Access Committee.
- report any concerns about program delivery to the Access Committee whose members would determine whether or not the program is fulfilling its terms of reference.
- if proper financial practices are not maintained, the designated government office will have the authority to terminate funding.
- provide advice if the project runs into any problems.

Staff hired for Access services and the sponsoring organization will:

- report regularly to the Access Committee.
- keep everyone involved in the Access Committee informed of the progress of the service.
- ensure that the basic information required to measure program effectiveness is maintained. The minimum amount of information required will include: number of clients served, services provided and outcome (e.g. permanent housing found/not found, permanent housing maintained/not maintained).

The Access Committee will:

- be aware of the progress of the service.
- address any problems as they arise.
- be in a position to evaluate the service and recommend whether or not it should be continued for a second year.

Conclusion

Learning More About Enabling People to Find Permanent Housing

One of the greatest benefits of the Access to Permanent Housing Committees is the variety of approaches that different communities will develop. From the experience and initiative in communities across the province, a great deal can be learned about innovative ways to help people find permanent housing.

The Provincial Access to Permanent Housing Committee will keep in touch will all local Access Communities, collect their ideas and share this information across the province.

In addition, through the Access Committee, some groups may become familiar with existing programs — such as the non-profit housing program — and may feel they can start developing a housing project. Just forming an Access Committee will strengthen a community, make it more aware of the problems of people who are homeless and make it possible to solve the structural problems which cause homelessness, ensuring everyone access to permanent housing.

Good luck!

If you would like more information on this initiative, please contact your local MCSS Area Office or local RHPO. A list of addresses and phone numbers is included at the back of this guide.

The Challenges of Running An Access Committee

Those who are familiar with community development and committee processes will likely be familiar with the challenges of keeping a volunteer community group active and effective. For those who are not, the following section lists some challenges and strategies for dealing with them.

Keeping Volunteers Involved

Organizing a volunteer committee, keeping it running and making sure it achieves its purpose is never easy. Often people start with great enthusiasm and then discover that it takes too much time. Numbers attending meetings become smaller and it may seem that all the work is being done by only two or three people.

The best way to keep volunteers involved is to make them feel their work is appreciated. Organizers may also want to encourage the Access Committee to set some goals and objectives that can be achieved quickly and easily. A sense of progress and early success will help to sustain enthusiasm and commitment.

Within the Access Committee, there is likely to be disagreement. Members represent different groups and organizations and will have different perceptions of the problems and opportunities. It may be difficult to remember that disagreement and discussion can be very healthy and helpful — but it's true, even if it is exhausting. Disagreement probably even has to happen for the Access Committee to see all aspects of the local situation, develop a sense of community and encourage commitment from everyone. This means that the chairperson may occasionally have to use all of his or her skills to encourage the group to be constructive and work towards a common goal.

Working with the Municipality

Municipalities in Ontario are strongly committed to solving the problem of homelessness. However, some may not have been able to give as much attention to housing problems as they would like. If, in the past, housing has not been a municipal priority, local organizations may feel it's not worth the effort to set up an Access to Permanent Housing Committee. However, we would encourage all communities to persevere and go through the process of forming an Access Committee.

With the focus on permanent housing and on developing a "community" solution, many municipalities will welcome the initiative and be supportive. Most municipalities will recognize the value of the projects their Access Committees put forward for Access Funding. However, there will be some municipalities which would like to contribute their share of the funding but will be unable to do so — at least in the particular year the request is made — because of budget constraints.

Even if a municipality is unable to provide funding, it can help the Access Committee take advantage of other housing programs and initiatives. (See page 23.)

Maintaining Interest and Support

In the course of its deliberations, the Access Committee may identify certain individuals or groups who are dealing with particularly severe problems of homelessness and may decide to focus its activities on the needs of these "priority" groups.

For example, one community may decide to concentrate most of its efforts on providing access to permanent housing for young people. If that happens, members of the Access Committee who represent other groups or individuals may feel that they no longer need to be involved. However, the Committee should make every effort to address at least some of the priority needs of other groups — even if it decides on one group as its main focus. In this way, all members will be encouraged to stay active. Solutions and initiatives developed to help one group may also be used with others.

Open communication and the sharing of ideas among all those concerned about homelessness can only benefit the community. In addition, priorities may change. It is the role of the Access Committee to monitor the problem of homelessness in the community. The people at greatest risk may change, and the Access Committee must be ready to respond.

Working Without Funding

Because there is a limit to the Access Funding, all proposals may not receive funding and some communities may find this discouraging. However, applying for Access Funding is only one of the roles of the Access Committee. A great deal can be done to improve access to permanent housing and to change attitudes towards homelessness within a community — without special funding. In addition, the Access Committees may provide a forum where organizations hear about other ministry or municipal or federal programs that can be used to increase the funding available to communities to fight homelessness.

If an Access Committee chooses not to develop proposals or ask for funding, its existence can help to make everyone in the community aware of the issues and the resources available. The Access Committee can also help co-ordinate local efforts to assist those who are homeless. It can become a powerful voice in shaping local policies and priorities and, in this way, make a very real contribution to solving the structural problems which cause homelessness.

Appendix

Ministry of Community and Social Services Area Offices

Barrie Area Office
P.O. Box 910
34 Simcoe Street
Barrie, Ontario
L4M 1A1
(705) 737-1311

Hamilton Area Office
P.O. Box 2112
6th Floor
119 King Street West
Hamilton, Ontario
L8N 3Z9
(416) 521-7290

Kingston Area Office
Suite 103
1055 Princess Street
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 5T3
(613) 545-0539

London Area Office
6th Floor
495 Richmond Street
London, Ontario
N6A 5A9
(519) 438-5111

Mississauga Area Office
Suite 212
1140 Burnhamthorpe Rd. West
Mississauga, Ontario
L5C 4E9
(416) 897-3154

North Bay Area Office
Suite 406
222 McIntyre Street West
North Bay, Ontario
P1B 2Y8
(705) 474-4452

Ottawa Area Office
7th Floor
10 Rideau Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 9J1
(613) 234-1188

Peterborough Area Office
60 Hunter Street East
Peterborough, Ontario
K9H 1G5
(705) 743-1624

Sudbury Area Office
Suite 1
8th Floor
111 Larch Street
Sudbury, Ontario
P3E 4T5
(705) 675-4515

Thunder Bay Area Office
3rd Floor
710 Victoria Avenue
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7C 5P7
(807) 475-1345

Toronto Area Office
9th Floor
2195 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1G1
(416) 965-1433

Waterloo Area Office
5th Floor Waterloo Square
75 King Street South
Waterloo, Ontario
N2J 1P2
(519) 886-4700

Windsor Area Office
1st Floor Ontario Government Building
250 Windsor Avenue
Windsor, Ontario
N9A 6V9
(519) 254-1651

Ministry of Housing Regional Housing Programs Offices

Hamilton (Southern Office)
55 Hess Street South
Hamilton, Ontario
L8P 4R8
(416) 521-7500
1-800-263-8295

London (Southwestern Office)
Suite 1100
380 Wellington Street
London, Ontario
N6A 5B5
(519) 679-7110
1-800-265-4733

Ottawa (Eastern Office)
2nd Floor
1150 Morrison Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8S9
(613) 820-8305
1-800-267-6108

Sudbury (Northern Office)
1191 Lansing Avenue
Sudbury, Ontario
P3A 4C4
(705) 560-6350
1-800-465-5015

Thunder Bay (Northwestern Office)
540 Arthur Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7E 5R7
(807) 475-1465
1-800-465-7017

Toronto (Central Office)
4th Floor
4950 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M2N 6K1
(416) 225-1211
1-800-668-0208